Why Buckle Up?

Seatbelts minimize the effects of vehicle crashes on the human body. In most crashes, there are two collisions. The first involves the vehicle striking an object, then buckling and bending until it comes to a stop. The second, the "human collision," is more costly and damaging. When the body strikes a hard surface, it comes to a stop within a very short distance. Because the hard surface has little give, the human body must absorb most of the force of the impact. Properly adjusted and fastened seatbelts distribute the forces of the rapidly decelerating body over a larger area, while stretching to absorb some of the force. In addition, belts hold the body in place while the car crushes and slows down.

Whether a person is belted or not often becomes the difference between life and death. While researchers may differ by a few percentage points either way, figures from seatbelt studies reveal:

- Seatbelts can reduce the number of serious injuries by 50 percent.
- Seatbelts can reduce fatalities by 40 to 60 percent.

Highway Patrol Annual Reports
http://www.doj.mt.gov/enforcement/forms.asp#montanahighwaypatrol
provide a number of charts relating to seatbelt use in Montana. For a national perspective, visit Buckle Up America,
http://www.buckleupamerica.org/ the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's campaign to increase the proper use of safety belts and child safety seats.

Seatbelt Facts

In 2005, 196 people died on Montana highways in crashes involving passenger vehicles. Over 70 percent of them—140 drivers and passengers—either didn't use or improperly used their seatbelts. In all likelihood, most, if not all of the 96 people who were killed because they were partially or completely ejected would be alive today had they been wearing their seatbelts.
Buckling up on every trip—not just the long distance ones—can save lives. Not wearing a seatbelt doubles your chances of being seriously hurt in a crash. Remember that most accidents occur at speeds less than 40 miles per hour, often within 25 miles of home.
Seatbelts and air bags are meant to work *together* to keep drivers and passengers safe. The presence of air bags in a vehicle doesn't mean seatbelts are unnecessary.
In the United States, auto accidents are the leading cause of paraplegia (from damage to the spinal cord).